

YELLOWSTONE RIVER CONSERVATION DISTRICT COUNCIL

CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS: Carbon, Custer, Dawson, Park, Prairie, Richland, Rosebud, Stillwater, Sweet Grass, Treasure, Yellowstone, McKenzie County North Dakota

Meeting Minutes -- September 15, 2005

MSU-Billings College of Business – Room 163

Members Present: Paul Gilbert, Sweet Grass CD; Tony Barone, Richland CD; Dave Davenport, Rosebud CD; Kenny Nemitz, Dawson CD; Phil Fox, Treasure CD; Bob Hector, Yellowstone CD; Luther Waterland, MACD; Walter Rolf, Custer CD and Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie ND, CD.

Others Present: Warren Kellogg, NRCS - TAC; Stan Daniels, YRCDC Coordinator; Jim Robinson, DNRC; Burt Williams, TNC-RAC; Gay Easton, Yellowstone CD; Kelly W. Duryea, RAC; Sharon D. Pearson, Burn's Office; Lou Grosskop, RAC; Rick Duncan, DNRC; Dale Vermillion, RAC; Liz Ching, Baucus's Office; Kelly Gilbertson, YRCDC Project Assistant; Greg Johnson, ACOE; and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Paul Gilbert called the meeting to order at 10:00 am on Thursday September 15, 2005. Introductions were made.

TAC update: See attachment for Warren's TAC meeting notes. Warren deferred to Greg Johnson who told us they were still waiting to hear what the final version of the budget will be for FFY2006. Greg was able to get an extra \$90,000.00 for the 2005 budget which has been contracted to the USGS to do bridge surveys so hydraulic modeling can be done in Stillwater and Yellowstone Counties. They will also do flood plain mapping and hydrology modeling for the upper basin to the Big Horn confluence. Greg brought part of his team for the 2 day meeting with the TAC. If there is extra 2006 money awarded, they feel additional topographic mapping should be done to acquire data. The processing could be done later as additional funds become available. Topographic mapping is baseline data needed for the rest of the studies. Greg explained that the Yellowstone River CES falls under the general investigation program and is funded as a line item. Congress sets the amount of funding. The Yellowstone River is a high priority project for the administration. Greg did not feel that the New Orleans situation would affect the Yellowstone River study. It is more likely that construction projects could be cut. It is possible that Greg could lose some of his staff that might volunteer to go to New Orleans. The GIS person that Greg wanted to bring to Billings got orders to go to FEMA and do GIS for them. Sharon Pearson of Burn's office said she felt that the budget already in the works would not be affected.

Jim Robinson continued the TAC update with a presentation on the Yellowstone River data download web page on the NRIS web site and products generated from the Merrick data. He showed examples of the work that has been done. This included the work recently completed by DTM Consulting on scanning and rectifying old aerial photography. Jim also showed the Council's web-site and how to access the NRIS page. The TAC requested approval to replace the old web page with this new page which has the Merrick data on it. This was approved by consensus vote. Warren stated that it is important to get funding to do the mapping in the other counties because a flood event could make it very hard to tie the topographic mapping together if it's done in different years.

Action was also needed on a \$5,600.00 contract with NRIS that funds their services through June 30, 2006. This will provide for such things as modifying the data download page, posting information, processing and anything else necessary to post data via their web-site. Council members had copies of the contract to review. This contract was approved by consensus vote. NRIS is also bringing some match to the table by contributing some of their time to the council. NRIS will document the match. Warren said funding for this contract will come from the YRCDC's 310 grant.

Warren continued with the TAC update with a recommended FFY06 budget, assuming ACOE funding will come through. See Warren's notes which are attached. Warren thanked Gay Easton and Bob Hector for attending the TAC meeting.

Kenny Nemitz is the Council member overseeing the invasive species scope of work. Action was taken for approval by consensus vote to post the Bockness/ Baker weed study on the web-site. There was discussion on adding a Russian Olive addendum to the literature review completed by Celestine Duncan and Janet Clark. Copies of this study were made available to the Council members. This will cost approximately \$4,000.00 and was approved by consensus vote. Stan will work on the contract and scope of work. Funding will come from the ACOE or the YRCDC's RDGP grant.

Kenny Nemitz commented that it would be a good idea to get the weed supervisors together and make them more aware of the invasive species component of the Yellowstone CES.

Under the water quality scope of work, the water quality compilation report completed by EPA will be sent to Phil Fox for his review and recommendation on whether it should be posted. Warren said that this data summary was completed by EPA and DEQ as part of a TMDL effort for the Yellowstone River mainstem.

Luther Waterland is the contact for the avian studies and Orvin Finsaas will review wetlands. Paul Gilbert is the contact for hydrology and Walter Rolf has hydraulics.

Merrick, the company that collected the topographic mapping on the 3 counties is submitting their study in a national competition. A poster and a 5 page document were given to the Council members for their review.

The TAC recommends having Susan Gilbertz attend the November meeting to present the approach that was taken to interview area landowners along the Yellowstone River. At this time the Council can decide how they want to approach the socio-economic scope of work. Warren hopes that some of the districts will actively assist with landowner meetings and making local contacts in the future. He will present a detailed outreach strategy at their next meeting.

Warren showed the large-scale study reach maps with ownership and without ownership. It is Warren's suggestion to send this information to the individual conservation districts in both electronic and hard copy form. The Council agreed by consensus to proceed.

Warren's last request was for the district administrators to continue working on the study reach landowner lists. He felt that it would be helpful to have the conservation district administrator's get together to discuss the CES effort and what their role might be. Warren also suggested that it would make a big difference if the Council members helped to make phone calls to the landowners. The RAC could also help.

Coordinator's Report: Stan Danielsen introduced Ann Rhine who presented the brochure and display unit. There was some discussion on the photos used, but the consensus was to go with the ones that had been chosen. There was also some information that will be changed and moved. The last sentence will be taken out. 2,000 copies of the brochure will be printed after the corrections are made. Stan will make the changes and be in contact with Ann. This action was approved by consensus vote. The display unit was set up at the back of the room. It made its debut at the Prairie County Fair. Stan said he has since made up a checklist list on how to set it up and how to pack it up for future users. Stan will be taking the display to the Area 4 meeting in Red Lodge. The question was raised as to whether the pictures could be identified, and we were told they could not.

Stan passed out the revised annual report. No comments were made. Barring any major revisions it will be forwarded to Laurie Zeller. Carol Watts expressed concern that this needed to be completed so that she could bill Laurie for funds in the pass-through grant. No funds can be expended until Laurie has a budget and a report.

Business meeting: Treasurer's report was given by Carol Watts. The financial report shows all the activity in the account since the last meeting. The grant statement shows the balances in the grant funds. The reports were accepted and filed for audit. The minutes for the June 16, 2005 meeting were accepted as written.

Walter Rolf said that when the Custer County Conservation District signed on as the fiscal agent for the YRCDC they agreed to pay for any audit as part of the administration fee. The audit is in November and Custer CD will pay for it.

The next meeting will be November 3, 2005 at Warren's request because he would like to schedule a TAC meeting for November 2, 2005. The November 16 meeting at the MACD Convention will be an informational meeting, no business will be conducted.

The meeting adjourned at 3:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator

Yellowstone TAC Meeting Notes

Sept. 13-14, 2005

ACOE Budget Outlook

FFY05

Original allocation (after savings and slippage) for Yellowstone River CES: \$125,000. Funds did not come available until April 2005, well over 6 months into the fiscal year. Nearly all of these funds went for ACOE project management and travel expenses. Reprogrammed FFY05 ACOE funds: \$90,000. These funds just became available about less than a month ago. Recommended use of those funds:

- Hydrology modeling (ACOE): \$26,000.
- Bridge surveys (USGS): \$16,000. Starting at Stillwater/Sweetgrass line, working east. May be able to provide additional funds to USGS after October 1st to continue this work into the fall.
- September travel (ACOE): \$10,000.
- Remaining Funds: ~ \$40,000. Put part or most into ACOE Survey's and GIS Section and/or provide additional funds to USGS for the bridge survey and additional Avian Scope logistics/coordination.

Some of the FFY05 funds will be carried over into FFY06. Congress has been more willing to allow ACOE to carry over monies than they have in the past.

All cooperative agreements between the ACOE and contractors now need to be set up on a reimbursable basis.

FFY06

The Yellowstone CES is one of the highest priorities for GI projects in the ACOE Northwest Division.

- President's Budget: \$800,000
- House Committee: \$0.
- Senate Committee: \$1 Million

There will be a Joint House/Senate conference sometime this fall. Unsure of the effect that the Katrina hurricane restoration costs will have on the final allocation.

Recommended budget expenditure (assuming \$1 million)

Riparian	(NRCS in-kind)
Geomorphology	50K (RDGP Grant)
ACOE Project Mgmt.	70K
Topography Mapping	200K
Socio-economic	100K
Fishery	
Avian	165K
Wetlands	
Hydrology	100K
Hydraulics	150K
Native American Coord.	10K
GIS/Info Mgmt	25K
Invasive Species	45K

FFY07

A budget was submitted by the ACOE 8-9 months ago. The amount can not be disclosed until the President's State of the Union speech next February, but the Yellowstone CES remains a high priority with the ACOE Division.

Biological Scopes of Work

Avian

PowerPoint presentation by Andrew Hansen and Danielle Jones (MSU-Bozeman) regarding last summer's pilot study and site selection. Their field work was completed in late June and early July. Danielle visited 19 sites in 7 counties completing 42 bird surveys over a 2-3 week period.

The pilot study was funded by the Nature Conservancy (\$25K). There were two main objectives for this pilot study:

- Determine the extent and characteristics of bird communities along the Yellowstone River.
- Provide insight on site selection and test methodology for the full Avian Scope of Work.

Two items need to be addressed prior to starting the full Avian scope of work:

1. Logistics: Need to start identifying study sites and arranging landowner access. There were access problems in the middle section of the river last summer.
2. Need to finalize the full Avian scope of work incorporating the following considerations for site selection:
 - Riparian vegetation complexity (including non-cottonwood stands and wetlands).
 - Adjacent land use.
 - Landscape differences.

Andy and Danielle will be invited to the next TAC meeting to discuss site selection considerations and common data fields with other biological SOWs. They will also be invited to a Council meeting later this winter to present their summer 2005 pilot work.

Wetlands

Discussed a revised draft wetland scope of work. The primary focus of the wetland draft scope will be to map the current extent of wetlands along the Yellowstone River, quantify change since the 1980s, and determine how human activities have influenced wetland extent and function over time. There will be new color infrared aerial photography available in 2006.

The TAC will be working with the ACOE and the Montana Natural Heritage Center (Greg Kudray) to further refine the scope of work and budget. Greg will be invited to the next TAC meeting to further discuss this scope. There may be sources of funding and match that the Heritage Center would be able to assist the Council with. Orvin Finsaas will be the Council representative for this Scope of Work.

Water Quality

Reviewed a summary of water quality data that EPA/Montana DEQ has compiled on the Yellowstone River. This summary will meet the initial task outlined in the Water Quality SOW. It was decided to invite representatives from EPA and DEQ to the next TAC meeting to talk about continued coordination (data analysis). Also will ask for direction from the YRCDC on whether they want to post or reference this summary on their web site.

George Jordan will send the current Water Quality SOW to all TAC members.

Invasive Species

Completed data summary compilation (Bockness and Baker) and will use the existing Duncan/Clark publication for the literature review. The TAC recommends doing two remaining tasks:

- Contract with Celestine Duncan to include Russian Olive as addendum to her publication. This will cost ~\$4,000. to have completed before next spring. Will need to get the YRCDC approval. Funding would either come from the ACOE or the YRCDC's RDGP grant. Stan will work on a sole source contract and scope of work, if approved by the Council.
- 2006 field work: Discussed what kinds of information/data might be useful. Some of the ideas included:
 - Determine the connection between invasive species infestations and adjacent land uses, management, and channel structures.
 - Focus work on study reaches and the mouths of major tributaries.
 - Effectiveness of different invasive species control treatments in a riverine-riparian environment.
 - Effects of weed infestations on land uses, values, productivity, wildlife, etc.
 - Be species specific. Targeted species include: Russian Olive, Salt Cedar, Leafy Spurge, and Spotted Knapweed.
 - Eventually develop BMPs by reach. It may be feasible to eradicate certain invasive species in some reaches and not in others; containment may be more appropriate for other reaches.

George Jordan will be working with Scott Bockness, Kenny Nimitz and the ACOE on the ideas listed above and make appropriate revisions to the Invasive Species SOW. May want to explore the idea of incorporating invasive species field work into the riparian SOW.

The TAC will also ask the YRCDC for direction on posting the invasive species data summary compilation on their web site.

The TAC will schedule a discussion on the riparian, wetlands, avian, and invasive species scopes of work at their November meeting to assure all scopes are being fully coordinated and will complement each other.

Hydrology, Hydraulics, and Geomorphology Scopes of Work

Geomorphology - Historical Aerial Photography Acquisition

There will be 4 aerial photography sets that have been, or will eventually be, scanned and georectified. The YRCDC currently has a contract with DTM Consulting to do this work, initiated this spring:

- 2001 Color Infrared (NRCS) - Available at NRIS
- 1995 DOQQ (USGS) - Available at NRIS
- 1976 ACOE photography – Hired DTM Consulting (Bozeman) to georectify photography already scanned using a USCOE indefinite delivery contractor. As a result of the rectification process, it was discovered that this photo set does not include the river from Intake to the Missouri River. Will have to replace this lower end with either 1978 or 1979 photography. Currently looking to what's available.
- 1950s photography – DTM is purchasing, scanning, and georectifying photography from 1949, 1950, and 1951.

DTM is also digitizing the “bank full” channel boundaries and flow center lines on all these sets to assist in evaluating the extent of channel migration and channel length changes over a 50 year period. These multi-year channel boundaries will be included in the 310 permit GIS project (we hope to demonstrate this to the TAC and Council before the end of the year).

Geomorphology Scope of Work

The TAC will need to decide on a common channel classification system at their next meeting to assure everyone is using the same standard.

Discussed 2006 geomorphology field work. The YRCDC has been awarded a RDGP grant from the 2005 Montana Legislature to begin doing this work. There are details as to schedules, funding, and sequence of work that needs to be ironed out before we can get started. Jim Robinson and Karin Boyd will provide a recommendation to the TAC in November on specific work products that can be started in 2006.

Topographic Mapping

Jim Robinson gave a presentation on the Merrick topographic data and mapping. He also showed the TAC the draft NRIS download page for the Yellowstone CES work. The TAC will recommend to the YRCDC that they approve this new page. Jim will give a similar presentation on the topo mapping and download page to the YRCDC.

Socioeconomic Scope of Work

Sociology – user interviews.

Susan Gilbertz briefly went over the interviews that were conducted this summer in cooperation with instructor/students from Alma College. A draft report will be sent out to the TAC for their review and comments (due to Susan October 17th). Burt Williams and Scott Rickard will be the primary reviewers. This study was not sanctioned by the YRCDC so is not part of the Yellowstone CES, however, a recommendation will be made to the YRCDC to have Susan give them a presentation at their November meeting that would illustrate the format and approach that might be taken for the expanded sociology task in the current Socioeconomic SOW.

Demographic and Economic study data design

Scott Rickard reviewed the “Yellowstone River Corridor Study Demographic and Economic Study Data Design” dated June 2005 with the TAC. We went through a brief discussion on data types for the different user groups. Scott will review the existing Socioeconomic SOW to make necessary revisions to the text and budget to more accurately reflect the approach outlined in his study design. It was suggested to Scott that he contact NRCS to access their National Resource Inventory data in order to evaluate its usefulness to this study.

Information Management/GIS Scope of Work

Remote PowerPoint presentation by ESRI personnel (Bryant Ralston and Timothy Weisenburger) to talk about the Enterprise GIS Application. The TAC requested this presentation to learn more about this system as a possible centralized database system to house organize and analyze the Yellowstone CES data. This program was designed to be accessible via internet or LAN (local area network) for multiple users. It is not necessary to be a professional GIS user or for each user to have a lot of software in order to use the database system.

Key Discussion Points:

- Would only need to purchase one license for the Enterprise GIS software. However, there is other software “Extensions” that would require separate licenses and would have to be purchased.
- Would need to hire a person or team with the appropriate expertise to develop the functional applications customized to the Yellowstone CES. We would likely need to keep them on retainer to assist with data format continuity and system maintenance.
- Annual maintenance fee would be charged for up-dates and technical support.
- Overall costs would likely exceed 100K.

The TAC is recommending that we not proceed ahead with this system, at least not right away. We will recommend to the YRCDC to stay with the approach that we have been using by simply making information/data/publications available on a data download page served up by NRIS; and eventually set up a FTP site within the ACOE where we can store and access information/data that is not yet complete or ready for public consumption.

NRIS Contract

Sibyl Govan (NRIS) reviewed a draft contract between Custer CD and NRIS. The contract outlines seven different tasks that would compensate NRIS for the work they are doing in downloading and processing Yellowstone CES data to make it available on the Yellowstone web site. A recommendation will be made to the YRCDC to approve and sign the contract. The amount in the contract is \$5592.65. NRIS will also be providing non-federal match to this effort.

Cumulative Effects Analysis

A major focus for the TAC in the near future will be to develop a standardized format, common data fields (where possible), and define a standard reference system to tie all the data to (i.e. river miles, reach breaks, valley sections, etc.). This will be an agenda item for the TAC's November meeting.

The next series of TAC meetings will have focus on:

- Clarifying and making a recommendation to the RAC and Council on what the Yellowstone CES outcomes should be.
- Identifying and establishing primary ecological relationships to effectively develop CES recommendations/BMPs.
- Identify specific data/informational needs (sound science) to be able to establish the ecological relationships.

Public Outreach

Need to develop a systematic approach to work with landowners, especially those located in the study reaches. Will approach the YRCDC on how they want to proceed with this. Some ideas include more Council and RAC involvement in organizing landowner meetings, meeting with the CD Administrators sometime this winter, and establishing "study reach" groups that would be on-going through the course of the CES.

Warren will send out hard and electronic copies of the recently developed study reach maps that are pertinent to each CD.